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Message Text

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15
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 IO-12 AID-20 DPW-01 OMB-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 /140 W
---------- 081646
R 020410 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9463
INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
USDEL JEC PARIS
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 5364

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS
SUBJECT: THE ICCS' S FIRST MAJOR TEST IN QUANG NAM

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SAIGON FROM DANANG APR 1
REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO

QUOTE DANANG 307

FOLLOWING IS A REPORT FROM THE POLOFF ASSIGNED TO
QUANG NAM PROVINCE:

SUMMARY: AFTER THE FOURTH INCIDENT SINCE THE CEASEFIRE
IN WHICH A MAJOR BRIDGE IN DAI LOC DISTRICT HAS BEEN
BLOWN UP, THE QUANG NAM PROVINCE CHIEF REQUESTED THAT THE
LOCAL ICCS TEAM INVESTIGATE. ACTION BY THE ICCS WAS HINDERED
BY NARROW OR CONFLICTING INTERPRETATIONS OF THE
PROTOCOLS AS BETWEEN REGION AND SUB- REGION LEVELS AND
WITHIN TEAMS THEMSELVES. A MORE SERIOUS IMPEDIMENT WAS
THE POLISH DISINCLINATION TO UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION AND
THEIR APPARENT PREJUDICE. LOCAL RESPECT FOR THE ICCS, AND
HOPE THAT IT MIGHT BE EFFECTIVE, HAS BEEN REDUCED. THIS INCIDENT
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IS REPORTED IN DETAIL AS A MICROCOSM OF ICCS PROBLEMS IN MR I.

END SUMMARY.

1. COMMUNIST SAPPER ACTIVITY IN DAI LOC DISTRICT:
SINCE THE CEASEFIRE TOOK EFFECT, THE PRINCIPAL BRIDGES
OF DAI LOC DISTRICT HAVE BEEN PRIME TARGETS OF VC SAPPER
UNITS. THE MAIN BRIDGE ACROSS THE SONG AI NGHIA AT DAI
LOC DISTRICT TOWN WAS BLOWN UP 30 MIN AFTER THE CEASEFIRE,
AND REMAINS UNREPAIRED. ANOTHER BRIDGE ACROSS THE SAME
RIVER, ABOUT 500 METERS NORTH OF DAI LOC SUB- SECTOR
HEADQUARTERS WAS BLOWN UP MARCH 3 BUT REPAIRED WITHIN TWO
DAYS. THE GIAO THUY BRIDGE (ALSO KNOWN AS LIBERTY BRIDGE)
WHICH CROSSES THE SONG THU BON BETWEEN DAI LOC AND DUY
XUYEN DISTRICTS, AND SERVES AS THE ONLY LAND LINK CURRENTLY
OPEN TO DUC DUC DISTRICT, HAS BEEN BLOWN TWICE -- ON
FEB 26 AND MARCH 23. ON THE LATEST OCCASION, TWO EXPLOSIVES
WERE PLACED, APPARENTLY BY FROGMEN. THE FIRST WAS
ELECTRICALLY DETONATED AT 0500 HRS, WHILE THE OTHER,
A DELAYED- ACTION EXPLOSIVE, DETONATED AT 1000 HRS, AND
WAS APPARENTLY INTENDED TO CATCH ARVN ENGINEERS IN THE MIDST
OF REPAIR OPERATIONS.

2. GVN AUTHORITIES IN QUANG NAM HAD UP TO THIS TIME
NOT MADE ANY REQUESTS FOR ICCS INVESTIGATION OF VC
VIOLATIONS OF THE CEASEFIRE, INCLUDING THE BRIDGE
MININGS MENTIONED ABOVE, DESPITE SUGGESTIONS BY THE LOCAL
U. S. JMT THAT THAT THEY DO SO. HOWEVER, IN THE LATEST
INSTANCE BRIG GEN NGUYEN DUY HINH, ARVN 3 RD DIV COMMANDER,
ANGERED BY AGAIN HAVEING RESUPPLY OF HIS 57 TH REGIMENT
OPERATING IN WESTERN DUY XUYEN CUT OFF, DEMANDED THAT
THE QUANG NAM PROVINCE CHIEF, COL VO TIEN PHUC, SUBMIT
A REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION TO THE ICCS. SUCH A REQUEST
WAS DULY SUBMITTED AT 1030 ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 23.

3. THE ICCS DELIBERATES - TO INVESTIGATE OR NOT TO INVESTIGATE:
AT 1230 THE SAME DAY THE ICCS MET WITH PROVINCIAL AND
U. S./ GVN JOINT MILITARY TEAM OFFICIALS. THEY WERE JOINED
BY COL L. C. BAUMGART OF THE CANANDIAN REGION II ICCS
CONTINGENT, WHO HAPPENED TO BE VISITING IN HOI AN AT THE
TIME. CHANCES OF A SPEEDY AND SUCCESSFUL INVESTIGATION
WERE IMMEDIATELY IMPEDED BY TWO OBSTACLES: ONE MINOR,
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ONE MAJOR. THE FIRST WAS PROCEDURAL, RAISED BY COL BAUMGART,

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WHO MAINTAINED THAT THE SUB- REGIONAL TEAM IN HOI AN WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION, BUT THAT THE MATTER MUST BE DECIDED BY THE REGIONAL ICCS IN DANAG. IN THIS OPINION HE MET NO DISAGREEMENT. HOWEVER, HE DID ENCOUNTER DISAGREEMENT ON ANOTHER TECHNICALITY, NAMELY HIS VIEW THAT ACCORDING TO THE PROTOCOLS ONLY THE MEMBERS OF THE FOUR- POWER OR TWO- POWER JMCS WERE AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT REQUESTS FOR AN INVESTIGATION, AND THAT THE PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES THEMSELVES COULD NOT DO SO. COL BAUMGART ORDERED MAJOR BURNS, HIS CANADIAN SUBORDINATE ON THE HOI AN ICCS TEAM, TO SUPPORT HIS INTERPRETATION.

4. ALTHOUGH THE PROCEDURAL TECHNICALITIES RAISED BY THE CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE SLOWED DOWN THE PROCEEDINGS, A SECOND, MORE CRUCIAL OBSTACLE WAS THE ATTITUDE DISPLAYED BY THE POLISH CONTINGENT ON THE LOCAL TEAM. LT COL PURWIN DEMONSTRATED BOTH AN EXTREME RELUCTANCE TO INVESTIGATE AS WELL AS A MARKED PREDISPOSITION TO DISCOUNT GVN STATEMENTS. HE ASKED THE PROVINCE CHIEF HOW HE COULD BE SURE THAT THE COMMUNISTS COMMITTED THE VIOLATION, WHILE CONJECTURING THAT THE EXPLOSION COULD HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY " ANY OLD MINE" WHICH HAPPENDED TO FLOAT DOWNSTREAM. IN RESPONSE INDONESIAN LT COL DAIAN REMARKED ON THE UNLIKELIHOOD THAT THE GVN WOULD BLOW UP ITS OWN BRIDGE, WHILE VARIOUS PROVINCIALS OFFICIALS POINTED OUT THAT A SWIMMER ' S MASK HAD BEEN FOUND IN THE AREA AND THAT THERE WAS FAINT CHANCE OF AN OLD MINE JUST DRIFTING DOWNSTREAM. THE POLISH TEAM MEMBERS ALSO EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN ABOUT THE SECURITY OF THE AREA AND THEIR SAFETY.

5. THE REGIONAL ICCS FAILS TO ACT:
IN ORDER TO COMPLY WITH COL BAUMGART' S INTERPRETATION OF THE PROTOCOLS, BOTH THE U. S. AND GVN CHIEFS IN HOI AN PARALLELED COL PHUC' S REQUEST THROUGH THEIR CHANNELS TO THE REGION II ICCS. ON MARCH 24 THE REGIONAL ICCS MET IN DANANG. MR. ERNEST HEVERT, HEAD OF THE CANADIAN TEAM, OVERRULED HIS SUBORDINATE ' S INTERPRETATION OF THE PROTOCOLS, AND AGREED THAT THE PROVINCE AUTHORITIES WERE FULLY COMPETENT TO SUBMIT A REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION. HOWEVER, THE LOCAL POLISH RELUCTANCE TO INVESTIGATE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

REINFORCED BY A SIMILAR ATTITUDE AMONG THEIR REGION LEVEL COMPATRIOTS. AS THEY WERE UNABLE TO AGREE TO A REPLY TO THE PROVINCE CHIEF' S REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION, THE REGION II ICCS REPORTEDLY DECIDED TO MAKE NO REPLY AT ALL.

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6. DURING THIS WHOLE PERIOD ARVN ENGINEERS WERE STANDING BY WAITING TO MAKE THE NECESSARY REPAIRS TO THE BRIDGE AFTER THE INVESTIGATION TOOK PLACE. WHEN IT BECAME EVIDENT THAT NO ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN, THE REPAIRS WERE SWIFTLY MADEAND THE BRIDGE REOPENED TO TRAFFIC.

7. COMMENT BY HOI AN POLOFF:
IN ITS FIRST TEST, THE HOI AN ICCS TEAM DEMONSTRATED THAT IT IS NOT EXEMPT FROM THE RESTRICTIONS AND DIVISIONS WHICH HAVE REPORTEDLY HAMPERED ICCS OPERATIONS ELSEWHERE IN VIETNAM. IN PARTICULAR, THE IMPRESSION LEFT WAS THAT THE POLISH DELEGATION WAS GRASPING AT ANY STRAW IN ORDER TO THWART AN INVESTIGATION. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CEASEFIRE, THE HOPE AMONG THE LOCAL POPULATION THAT THE ICCS WOULD BE EFFECTIVE BATTLED WITH THEIR MEMORIES OF THE INERTIA DISPLAYED BY THE OLD ICC. JUST AS IN REGARD TO THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POSSIBILITY OF A LASTING AND TRUE PEACE, THE POPULACE WERE SKEPTICAL WHILE HOPING AGAINST HOPE. ANY SUCH HOPEFULNESS HAS BEEN GREATLY ERODED BY THIS PARTICULAR CASE. THE IMPRESSION IS STRONG THAT THE ONLY VIOLATIONS WHICH THE ICCS WILL INVESTIGATE ARE THOSE WHICH WERE DIRECTED AGAINST THE ICCS ITSELF AS IN THE PROMPT INVESTIGATION OF THE WOUNDING OF AN ICCS HELICOPTER PILOT BETWEEN HOI AN AND DANANG. EVEN THIS INVESTIGATION OF THE HELICAPTER INCIDENT WAS CONDUCTED IN A MANNER DISPLAYING DISTRUST OF THE GVN.

8. EXCEPT FOR AN INITIALLY COOL RECEPTION, THE SOCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL GVN AUTHORITIES AND THE ICCS TEAM HAVE BEEN CORDIAL AND WARM, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO MAJOR PROBLEMS. THE LOCAL PEOPLE HAVE DISPLAYED ATTITUDES RANGING FROM CORDIALITY TO INDIFFERENCE, BUT NO OVERT HOSTILITY. HOWEVER, WITHOUT A CHANGE IN ITS PERFORMANCE AND ATTITUDE, IT IS OUR JUDGMENT FROM THE HOI AN VANTAGE POINT THAT VIETNAMESE ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ICCS MAY DETERIORATE TOWARD HOSTILITY AND NON- COOPERATION. END COMMENT. SIGNED THOMSEN UNQUOTE
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